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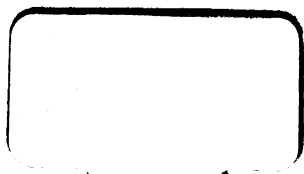
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THE
GIKIŌ DEN:

A JAPANESE ROMANCE.

BY

UYEKI TAKEHIKO.

With four illustrations by Gekkō.



MATSUI CHIUBEI.

14, Shibai-chō, Shiba-ku,

Tōkyō, JAPAN.

1887.

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PREFACE.

This work was originally compiled not for the ostentatious purpose of publication but for private study; and would have probably remained locked up in my desk had it not been for the suggestion of a certain gentleman, that if the work, however crude and imperfect, were published it might give an impetus towards the study of English in this country and serve to bring on the field a larger number of students. As I could not but acquiesce in the truth of his opinion, I have resolved to reduce my writing to the type, and moreover his experience in journalism is in itself an augury of success, which I hope it may be my fortune to meet with.

There is a story told of a very punctilious Greek, who on the occasion of the funeral of his little child, apologized his audience for bringing out so small a thing. This was the result of a sincere conviction that his child did not deserve so much honour. I follow in the path of this polite Greek, when I confess the unworthiness of this work and ask the kind indulgence of the reader.

By way of apology, I may add that it has been my endeavour to lay before the reader the moral sentiments which used to guide our forefathers in their dealings with their neighbours. These moral sentiments may appear the vortexes of human folly into which they threw their lives. Irrational and subversive of good social order as they may appear, they are nevertheless the very gem within which was the development of our law. These moral precepts had hitherto discharged among us the functions of law as it is interpreted now. And before the law has emerged to the present form of contract to which men bind themselves by mutual consent, we were dependent for our welfare on the influence of ethic which imperceptibly regulated our conducts *vis a vis* society.

If I have succeeded in delineating one phase of our social system in the olden times, my highest ambition is realized.

UYEKI TAKEHIKO.

September 20th, 1887.

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Chapter 1.

AT one and twenty a certain Hatsuneya Harujirō found himself in possession of an immense fortune by the death of his father. It was whispered among the circle of his best friends that he would be the last man in the world to marry out of love; and this prophecy was never called into question.

“Harujirō is a man of hard facts,” said one of his friends who professed to be critic of human nature “he comes of a money-getting stock and a money-holding stock. He will never spend one *bunkiu* for a woman as long as he lives.”

"Yet he is fond of a pretty face," said another.

The rest of the gentlemen were seized with a somewhat troublesome cough and each in turn would drown the voices of the contending philosophers.

"Harujirō is a wise man," mocalized another—"he loves his ledger, his *soroban*, his rice, and his life. He is a happy contented man. I wish to Heaven I were; but that is past praying for."

It was so painfully true, that the physician who happened to be present showed the tact of his fraternity by saying that if this weather lasted longer there would be many sick persons.

"You should know," said the second speaker,—“then you shall have a fine time of it.”

“That is one thing,” continued he,—“Well he is a hard-working merchant, but knows nothing about the means and ways of the fashionable society.”

Meanwhile, the unconscious Harujirō had finished his morning prayers to the deities, and was preparing to spend his day. He sat in his room in a reflective mood, now stealing a look at the ceiling and now casting a glance on the garden. Was any one looking at him? Not a soul, but the very shadow of himself on the mat. He stood up, and after pausing a minute or two, made towards the door. He hurried to the tea-house, which he was in the habit of visiting, whenever he felt gloomy. There he met his favorite *geisha* towards whom he entertained no feeling except that of kind-

ness growing out of a long acquaintance. After partaking of a few fishes, and drinking a bottle of *sake*, he left the house and struck resolutely towards that quarter of the town occupied by gamblers.

They had an extensive organization throughout the country and held an active communication with their brethern living in the different parts of the country. It was, however, mainly kept together on sentimental grounds. They were, from their degraded and yet very powerful condition, allowed a great measure of licence, and in fact, the most dangerous body in the State.

It is actually true, that violent and fatal riots were common among them; but on the least symptom of aggression by the military class they were united and dangerous at

once. They were united and dangerous now.

A girl of their order had disappeared. She was very beautiful and of good character, being in fact a general favorite among the young men more for her wit and sprightliness than for her discretion. But no man of respectable position would have thought of marrying her; but she disappeared and more than one *samurai* was suspected.

Certain rumors of this kind had reached Akebono Minezō that morning. He was a fireman by profession and determined to go and hear what was the matter. He stood rather in a curious position. He made friends among all the classes of the society from the proudest *samurai* down to the meanest of gamblers. His courage and his disposition to protect the weak were the object of

praise. He was credited with knowing the ways and habits of gamblers. Accordingly, he was employed on occasions similar to the present, as a sort of diplomat between the rivaling parties, exciting no jealousy from either class.

He was in a narrow street when the noise of the outcasts struck on his ear. His experienced eye at once saw that something was wrong. He halted where he was and watched their procession that came to sight. They were boisterous without being merry, and laughing, and yet savage. There was a dim, dull anger in their noise which would break into wild fury when night and leisure came. Hatsuneya Harujirō, who fell in with Akebono Minezō, and who appeared very much agitated asked what was the matter. Akebono

Minezō said :—

“A *samurai* has carried off Ume and I wish him joy of his bargain.”

“Did they find that out?” demanded Harujirō, his face mighty pale and his body shivering.

“Did they find that out?” echoed Minezō again and again.

“I wish somebody had put stop to it,” said the merchant in a tone which plainly told his grave anxiety.

Minezō shrewd, as he was, suspected that his friend or rather his patron was connected in one way or other with the mysterious disappearance of the girl. He promised him to stop the coming riot. In what manner he settled the affair we cannot tell; but it was evident that Minezō set himself

to the task with a commendable zeal and tact.

Towards the evening when the fearful scence was about to be enacted, the following notice appeared on the wall of a house in the street where Minezō parted with Hatsuneya Harujirō:—

“Ume is safe and amply provided for. No wrong has been done. For further particulars apply within.”

Many did so. The answer was easily given. The girl has become tired of her life and has fled to a monastery.

“Your authority is good?”

“Akebono Minezō.”

This apparently satisfied every body and there was no more carousing, crowding, and threatening.

Chapter 2.

HARUJIRŌ walked thoughtfully through the streets when he came across Uchi-mata Kōan. He quickened his steps, and catching him by the sleeves, addressed him. The doctor turned his odd-looking face towards him and said:—

“I was looking for you.”

“And I was looking for you,” answered Harujirō.

“What did you want with me, Sir?” said the medical man.

“I wanted your advice to get rid of my headache.”

“Oh indeed! I will tell you what,” muttered

the doctor apparently disgusted at the demand of Harujirō.

“Well,” said the doctor, “here is a piece of good news. A woman of very bad character—though some people say good—has repented of her sins and fled to a monastery for refuge. Her story holds good. It is a long one and I believe it.”

Harujirō nodded his head three or four times as if in approval of the faith of the doctor. “A people tells me,” continued he “that there was to have been a riot about this woman, but that some body stoped it. I almost wish he had not.”

“Is the woman so utterly worthless then?” asked Harujirō.

“When you and I are in the graves, she’ll be working mischief and evil,” returned

the doctor.

"Yet they say that she is good-hearted, charitable, and to be sure, she is popular."

The doctor delivered this last sentence as if to redeem, to a certain extent, the harshness of his first observations. Harujirō, who appeared at loss what to say, recovered his courage and asked:—

"But are you sure that you understand woman?" The doctor looked down on him with something like contempt. "Certainly I, who am the professional medical man, thought that I had seen through the woman, and was in hopes that I might get at the men—the men of the world like yourself. But when you tell me that I can't even understand a woman, I of course give up the hope."

"Do not be angry. I only wanted to make myself sure that I am coming to the right person."

"Let us come to my house," said the doctor somewhat softened by the explanation of Harujirō.

They came upon a tea-house. There was a furious riot of some sort inside. While they were asking a bystander the meaning of it, the riot overflowed the door and the riotors came pouring out before the anxious wayfarers. They stepped back and looked on a sight not uncommon then.

"There will be a fight," remarked the doctor.

That was soon evident. The confusion of riotors begun from the very first to show a tendency to make a circle; that circle

grew more definite each moment, and on the utterance of a few sharp and terrible words, formed itself perfect, in the dead silence of expectation, with one man in the centre. This man, who happened to be facing the two companions, was well known to both of them: a *samurai* on whose person and face were stamped long age of careful breeding and irresponsible ferocity, with the strength of a tiger. We call this man Masaki. He put his sword in tierce, level with his right eye and waited for the foes to attack him. They threatened to crush him every moment, but did not dare open the fight. They were armed with weapons of all sorts—such as only a mob would have cared to carry. Harujirō was greatly agitated and made flickering efforts to rush into the centre, but

drew back as if held by an impulse. His eyes and body followed the movement of his brave friend: his anxious look grew more and more intensified as the *samurai* fretted by the delay of his adversaries changed his position more than once to pounce upon them. He remained speechless for some time, but as if by a sudden touch of lightening he uttered:—

“There will be blood.”

“Death,” replied the bystanders. It was past any one’s interfering now. The naked steel was out and must not be put back to the scabbard before it tasted the warm blood. The spectators were not long kept in suspense. They were now treated to a most excited and grand game, yet without danger to them. The brave swordsman made a rapid feint in *carte*, and walked away laughing. For

an instant only. Turning and coming swiftly down, he attacked the foes furiously. The deadly weapon went with the rapidity of a lightening. In a short time, Masaki Isami was wiping his sword on his sleeves made of white crape. The blows were so deftly dealt that the enemies did not feel them at once, but after a short pause their knees would give away and fall down stone dead. The mob dispersed. Isami, Harujirō, and Kōan met face in face exchanging compliments. Harujirō wore a different countenance now. It grew radiant with joy—such as only the men who escaped from the grim hold of death would experience.

Chapter 3.

AFTER a short conversation, the secret of which was not divulged, the three separated each going his own way. The streets of Asakusa, with the multitude of the people, were roaring that day, a little more noisy, if not more busy than usual. In a somewhat noisy street, the physician stopped before a dainty looking house which bespoke the particular taste of the inmates. Towards the street, the house was protected by the black wooden fences with holes in the middle, which can be shut at pleasure. In an instant, the bolt was withdrawn, the physician entered, and it was fastened again.

Here was a change. Here was sudden peace, and nearly silence; for the roar of voices and the clatter of wooden clogs without ceased to strike his ear.

The house formed at the back three sides of a quadrangle, adorned with rare trees carefully trimmed, and broken here and there by beds of grovels over which streams might have run. The fourth side of the quadrangle was made by a high fence almost buried in wisteria.

The physician turned to the servant girl who had let him in and was saying—"Hana, don't trouble yourself for me," when a very quiet, solemn, and clear voice called him—"This is very kind of you. You came to—." The sentence was not concluded. But the physician knew very well what the

speaker was going to say.

“Mr. Masaki Tatewaki,” said the doctor, “I have something very terrible to tell you.”

The man, who was thus addressed, was not a very handsome man, but one with a very gentle and intensely sagacious face. He had a small topknot dressed only that morning. He was dressed in black silk; his under-garment was of the same material but of brownish colour; the sleeves of his *juban* were of white satin; his girdle was a very expensive one,—strong, yet pliable, thicker, and wider than ordinary ones. It was tied on his back not in knot but in form of fold. Such was the graceful figure which saluted the physician and led him into the inner apartment. They

entered by a low door, passed up a narrow passage, and found themselves in a little snug room. The light fell from the opening—for this room had only one opening—the wall on the three sides blocking out the world.

“I know the news,” said Masaki Tatewaki, “I want you to break it to my wife.”

The visitor nodded and fell into a meditation. Presently, he recovered and whispered—“Where is she? This is terrible.” “Yone,” called out the husband, clapping his hands in the narrow passage. The moment she appeared he beckoned her to come into the room.

“Mrs. Masaki!” said the visitor.

“At your service,” she replied quietly with a brightened face.

"I am come to see you."

"Very much obliged to you."

"Would you not like to have your son by your side?"

"I wish I always could," replied Mrs. Masaki not a little puzzled by the singularity of the question.

"Can it be possible?" resumed the doctor.

"Why, unless something happens that put an end to our existence."

As she spoke, she cast doubtful looks on her husband who remained motionless.

"Was my son killed?" demanded the good lady.

"Nothing of the sort. Please be calm. I'll directly tell you what brought me here," answered the doctor.

The physician, who had in his vocation

seen women in most phases of passion and anger, thought she will soon cry. The anxious glances, the compressed lips, the clattering of the teeth soon told that she felt a wild emotion.

"Your son," said the doctor, "has killed twenty gamblers in a brawl to-day."

"Oh that he should be guilty of such an action! Oh that is too cruel of him, too cruel!" uttered Mrs. Masaki breaking into violent sobs.

"Never mind that," interposed her husband who watched the scene from the very beginning with a profound silence.

"The way to save your son lies in finding out the cause of the brawl," interrupted the doctor.

"You ought to know it, every bit of it,"

uttered the good lady in a rage who suspected the doctor.

"Well then you see, Mr. Masaki I can do nothing. Mr. Masaki what can I do?"

"You can do nothing whatever, doctor. I must fight them out, but I must suffer for the action. Do you understand, Yone?"

"No, leave me alone. You are all against me, Sir," she said angrily.

And the two went away without hearing further protest from Mrs. Masaki. But heart-broken, as she was, she had perceived, on seeing their eyes meet, that there was some set purpose between the two men.

Chapter 4.

Masaki Tatewaki and Uchimata Kōan sat, assuming a serious air, and engaged in a discussion.

“Mr. Masaki,” said the doctor, “let yours then be the open opposition; but remember that I am assisting you. The time may be long, and my hand may never be seen, but the evil will come.”

The two parted. Masaki Tatewaki made his way to Riogoku, for the reason best known to himself, where he called in a restaurant named Tamaya which did profitable business in letting out pleasure boats. As he entered the house, he saw a boat lying in the canal with

four stalwart men in it. They were waiting for some fresh supply of *sake* and eatables. A watchful face was peering from the screen of the boat. It was Ikeyama Hikozyayemon's who had absconded some years ago. As *sake* was brought in and the boat was about to be loosened from the fastening, he stepped lightly ashore and bade the boat to go without him. At this, the rest of the young men hid themselves inside the screen; while *sendos* rowed out of the canal. Ikeyama Hikozyayemon saluted Masaki who returned the compliment with a gush of eloquence. The two hired a room in the restaurant and were soon seen engaged in deep consultation.

"Sir," said the harsh voice of Ikeyama, "I have heard that your son Isami has killed twenty men in a fight."

"Yes, it is true," answered Masaki.

"Are you ready to fight?"

"Not with a man of your reputation," uttered Masaki evading the point of the inquiry.

"What do you mean by that, Sir?" demanded Ikeyama Hikozaemon astonished by the bluntness of the reply.

"I mean with a man of your reputation as a swordman," replied Masaki very coolly. Ikeyama Hikozaemon seeing it impossible to exact any answer as to the preparations Masaki Tatewaki might make or might have made for the coming fight, he withdrew from the apartment leaving his companion to himself.

Masaki called the proprietress of the house and tried to hear some particulars of the brawl—its origin, what the people say

about it—if there were any one who knew the secret of it. She knew almost as much about it as did Masaki himself. He brought all his oratorical energy to bear upon her; but she could not be brought to the point. So, he abandoned his task, called up for bill, paid it, and made his way towards home.

Chapter 5.

In the corner of a dilapidated building, that stood in a street of Asakusa, affording shelter to street singers and other equally degraded classes, sat Masaki Isami wondering what he would do with himself. Had he known everything, he might have spared himself the trouble of thinking over the matter, for his father and others had already taken it into their hands. The world was well with him: he was handsome, young, of good health and great personal strength and courage. But for the present, at least, he was out-lawed: he violated the laws of the country by killing people in a street

brawl; he assisted a friend of his to carry off a girl; he put his parents and friends into a serious trouble. What he would do? How did he come to participate in a brawl? Had he any moral obligation to commit himself to the length of a murderer? These are the very points which we must find out. With this view, let us trace every step of Masaki Isami.

He laughed as he thought, "I am the most foolish fellow in Yedo."

"But" said he to himself, "I have the satisfaction to know that I have repaid a debt of gratitude to my friend."

Just as he finished his soliloquy, a strange apparition arose from the opposite corner of the building to his great astonishment. He snatched up his sword, and making towards the

door, confronted his new adversary with a haughty bow.

"My dear Masa" said the apparition, "may I ask what is the matter with you?"

He was still more puzzled by this question and wondered how he or she could manage to steal into the place and who he or she was. The situation has not yet dawned upon his mind. He was entirely alone in the world; but this strange figure came and spoke to him in a kindly manner. Not only that, it knew his name,—the more wonderful because it was the pet term with his mother. The figure slowly advanced towards him and uncovered his head. He was wrapped in a straw mat which he never took off except when performing occasional ablution. He was a middle-sized, bull-necked man of about thirty. He

had an eye like polished jet, vigour, strength in his carriage, and a humored rascality in every line of his face. Such was the once gay and profligate Iseya Kiuji. Now he was reduced to the condition of a begger owing to his extended course of profligacy and debauchery.

"It is a long time," remarked he, "since we parted at Yanagibashi."

"What," continued he "about that merchant who rescued you from that piece of scrape that might have disgraced your name for ever?"

He went on pouring out the torrent of the old recollection. Masaki Isami stood silent, staring on the face of the speaker. He could not still make out who he was. The stranger greatly vexed at the apparent

stupidity of his old acquaintance shook his head and said:—

“Do you remember Hatsuneya Harujiro?” At the mention of his friend’s name his memory returned to him at once. He broke into sighs and said:—

“O dear me! How stupid I am, I know you now.”

“What a metamorphosis! I should not have known you again,” continued he, “no body would believe that I saw you in such a guise. I wonder if my eyes deceive me.”

“I am astonished myself,” said the begger, “that you, a son of gentleman and a youth of culture should linger in here.”

By this time, Masaki Isami fully recovered himself from the effect of the surprise and proceeded to acquaint his old friend with the

particulars of his adventure. He bade him to keep the matter a profound secret. Iseya pledged himself not to let the cat out of the bag. He admired the courage and grateful nature of Masaki Isami. He weighed *pro* and *con*, whether the deed which Masaki Isami had performed, corresponded with a piece of kindness shown to him by Hatsuneya Harujiro in the past. As we are already conversant with what Isami had done we shall see what that piece of kindness shown to him by Hatsuneya Harujiro amounted to.

One fine summer day, some five or six years ago, Masaki Isami went to a tea-house at Yanagibashi. He had picked up a quarrel with a gambler of the most notorious character, arising from a trifling matter. Words changed to blows and there were some casual-

ities on the both sides. This quarrel would have assumed a greater dimension had it not been for the timely interfering of Hatsu-neya Harujiro, who brought the two adversaries to reason. He caused a banquet to be given in celebration of the conclusion of peace; friendly cups were exchanged between the principal combatants and their followers who had swollen to a considerable number by this time. The expenses had, as a matter of course, to be paid by the principal parties. In those days, the *samurai*—though they had a great measure of liberty over other classes—could not engage in a fight with the common people. If they did, it was at the risk of their positions, and perhaps their heads. Especially so, when one is not independent and participates

in such a brawl as Masaki Isami had taken part in. If Hatsuneya Harujiro had not stopped it, Masaki Isami would have been ejected from his family and from his class, of course. Under such circumstances, Masaki Isami felt a debt of gratitude towards Hatsuneya Harujiro. This debt he repaid now.

Chapter 6.

IT was evening, and the gamblers were abroad going to their favorite resorts to ply their avocation. Ikeyama Hikozaemon ostentiously choose the streets which were frequented by them. Many of them greeted him warmly, most looked kindly at him. It might seem strange, that the man known as a liar, should have influence with them. But, as he was a dicer, fighter, and worse, he endeared himself to the gamblers. In any dispute, he had always been on their side. Besides, his strength and physical power rendered him admirable among them, since they lived by their strength, dearly loved fighting, and

as brave as lion. There was an element of contradiction in him, however. He was charitable. There were often sharp distress among the poor classes of the city. His hand was always open. He was certainly popular with them.

Had he been less capricious he might have been an idol among the dangerous fraternity.

"So your role is to lead the rabble," said his friend who accompanied him.

"Yes," retorted Ikeyama Hikozaemon, with a sneer, "and not a bad one. You shall see the reception at their hands directly of the man who could pretend to defy their power."

"They are reckless and do not see the strength of other people," said his friend

with a degree of contradictory emphasis.

"Of that I know nothing and care less," said Ikeyama, "I want power, and I get it through them. That is all I care for."

"You have no sentimental feelings about the preservation of your men, then?" asked his companion.

"None whatever. All said and done, man. That is all."

The friends walked on at leisure, and at the end of the street they parted. Ikeyama entered a house on the left hand side, while his friend was lost to view among the crowd.

The entrance to the building was entirely blocked up by gamblers. There was one or two new faces among them. One of them

seemed extremely anxious to be introduced to Ikeyama Hikozaemon. Ikeyama stared at his face, then turned away quickly, and whispered to the landlord. There was nothing in this man's face to excite curiosity, except perhaps his humorous look.

"I have to ask leave to present to you Hirutonbi-no-Hachi," said the landlord.

"I receive Hirutonbi-no-Hachi with all good will and honour," replied Ikeyama with an air of vast importance.

"Do you make long stay?" interrogated he of the stranger.

"Who can say when? I suppose until I have diced away my money or have killed a man or two in a brawl, or done something which will make me fly your presence.

Dicing and brawling are the elements in which I live."

"Faith, then you will do here," said Ikeyama.

At once, the house has been converted to a scene of general dissipation, and riot.

We call the landlord Onikuma. Ikeyama said to him:—

"I have been with Masaki Tatewake."

"You?," said Onikuma, "and what does he say about the matter?"

"Fight to the last man," answered Ikeyama.

"What is their strength, then?"

"Of that, I could get nothing out of that old staff."

"But I should think" continued Ikeyama, "that their strength all told does not exceed two hundred."

“Very well then.”

“But it is not a question of numerical strength, but of courage and skill.”

“It is true,” said Onikuma “but from my experience I should say that one hundred of us is enough to fight them out.”

“Well,” said Ikeyama, “you ought to know better than I do; you are a swordsman yourself. I look to you to see to that.”

Onikuma had determined to destroy his enemies. He had very calculating turn of mind: he caused a false report to be spread throughout the town that he feared the influence of Masaki Tatewaki, of his son Isami, and his friends. In the meantime, he called his followers to a solemn convocation and assigned to each of them a task according to his ability. If any one of them failed in his

task, he was to pay for it with his head. Such was the outline of the plan adopted for the preconcerted attack on the domicile of Masaki Tatewaki. We will leave them here for the present giving them an ample time to make the necessary preparations.

Chapter 7.

One fine morning in the month of June, sat Hatsuneya Harujiro occupied in his customary avocations, and yet unable to suppress the recollection of that *mêlée* between his friend Masaki Isami and the local gamblers, of which he was an eye-witness. At irregular intervals, after a few minutes of abstraction, Harujiro would mutter some unintelligible interjections, and apply himself with renewed steadiness of purpose to the figures before him. But again and again the same thoughts came back despite his efforts to prevent it, confusing him in his calculations and utterly distracting his attention. At

length, he gave up his task and allowed the abstrusive train of his thought to take its own course. As he was seated behind the counter, Uchimata Kōan waltzed in the shop in a breathless hurry. He uncovered his clean shaven head, exposing to the view, many prominences, which looked like so many rice damplings put together. His costumes consisted of a long surtout which was cut on the back, to let the sword pass; two silk dresses of yellowish tint which were worn one over the other; short under-garment (which corresponded with under-shirt of foreigners) and a silk girdle. The surtout had, as a matter of course, the customary *mon* (family crest) of exceptionally large size, which might have measured five inches in diameter. The sword he wore through the

belt, having the hilt and a greater part of the scabbard projected. In fact, he did not wear the sword but it hung dangling about his waist. He had the most comical air imaginable. He thrust his hands into the sleeves which swung forwards and backwards as he walked, with his body thrown back. A long red silk cord hung from the hilt of his sword. It waved in the air, and a puss played at it, tossing it up in her efforts to catch it. On his face was indelibly stamped the mark of his voluptuous habits. It was made still more conspicuous by the last night revelry. To all intents and purposes, he affected to be sober; but his bodily movements betrayed his being drunk. The clerks, office boys, servant girls, and what not turned out to see him and broke into

violent laughter. This scene amused Harujiro so much so that he dismissed, if not for ever, at least for the present, the anguish recollection and saluted the medical man—

“How are you Dr. Kōan? I am delighted to see you.”

“Thank you, I am well,” answered the visitor.

“You look,” continued he, “splendidly well this morning, Mr. Harujiro. A lovely weather, isn’t it?”

“A fine weather,” returned the merchant.

“I am come to see you.”

“What can it be?”

“A serious matter that must be settled with your usual promptitude and energy.”

At this announcement, the whole body of the servants withdrew who doubtlessly ex-

pected to be treated to a series of comical evolutions by the doctor. Harujiro beckoned him to come to his private room. The physician followed the merchant and repaired to the best room in the house. The sliding door, which was made of ponderous *keyaki* wood, was shut behind them. The room was, in fact, the stronghold of the merchant. It was built in a most compact manner. No burglar could think of breaking into it. Inside, it was a dead silence occasionally broken, however, by the clicking sound of the old Japanese clock, which sound was produced by the loosening of the rope doing duty as a pendulum. Any stranger who had been invited to this room for the first time must be amazed at the richness and splendour of the furniture. The superfine mats worked to

a peculiar size—the most exquisite pictures—the costliest bronze works—and other articles of richest ornament, quite dazzling from their beauty, encounter him on every side. In this room, the two men sat on silk *futon* opposite each other with a *hibachi* (charcoal box) between them. The merchant poured out tea from a gold tea-pot into the tiny cups placed on the gold trays of the most exquisite workmanship. The visitor sipped his tea, smacked his lips in approval of the first class quality of tea, took the cup to his hand, examined it with a critical eye, and praised it very much. What immense fortune the man has! I will get some of his riches at the first opportunity. These ideas flashed across his mind as he laid the cup on the tray.

"Hem! My attention was quite absorbed with the tea," uttered the visitor as if to conceal his real feeling. The merchant suspected nothing, pleaded the want of hospitality, and was very much pleased with the critical opinion of his visitor on the objects of art, which adorned his room.

"Do you recognize this hand-writing?" asked Kōan producing a letter apparently written by a female.

Harujiro took it up, glanced hurriedly over the address, and seemed dumfounded for a moment, his face pale and his eyes downcast. But directly he put his face behind the sleeves of his dress to conceal his wild emotion. The physician at once saw that his plan was producing the desired effect on his victim. Presently, the courage and wit which deserted

him at the first effect of the surprise returned to the poor merchant.

"This is a base conspiracy," said the rich man, "to defraud me of money."

"Base conspiracy! There isn't such a thing in the world," retorted the physician.

"You villain!"

"Not I. It is you denying the fact in the face of it."

Hatsuneya Harujiro, stung by the taunt, darted an indignant glance at the physician who closely watched him.

"Be composed, Sir," resumed the physician, "look at these lines again."

The merchant examined it again. There was nothing in that letter which could be called in question. The address and name were correct. To tell the truth, Harujiro

lost that letter the day after he received it. But, shrewd as he was, he believed that the conspiracy did not originate with the physician, but he was being made a tool of by somebody else. Such being his conviction, he tried hard to repossess himself of the letter, resorting to diplomacy; but in vain. He threatened to give him up to the magistrate; but in vain. The more he got excited the more calm the physician grew. The merchant trembled with rage, his heart heaved within, left his seat, and made towards the door. But instantly back he came, sat again, then left, and again came back.

The visitor seeing, that his victim lost the command of himself, changed his posture and said:—

“Be rational, Sir. This is business and

agitation interferes with it. This girl, daughter of a gambler, you or your friend has carried away. She is living now in a monastery. Is not that the case?"

Harujiro shut his eyes, said nothing, thereby acknowledging the charge.

"This," continued the visitor, "is too serious to be contemplated with complacency. Your honor and name are at stake. And"—

"Do you hear me, Sir?" asked the physician, seeing the dumb-struck appearance of the merchant.

"I, who," resumed the worthy man, "enjoyed your company and your influential patronage—am I going to—do you suppose that I'm going to rob you?"

With this outburst of grateful recollections, he stopped short, cheered up the merchant,

and assured him that he shall keep the matter secret. By this time, the rich man composed himself, paid three hundred *ryo* to the physician as a price of secrecy. The knave warmly thanked the rich man telling him how his wife and children would feel grateful; how his father would praise him; what high opinion his grand-father (who was dead long ago) would entertain of him, and so on, and took his leave.

The merchant, left alone, pictured to himself the dreadful consequences that might have occurred if the matter had leaked out. As he reflected upon them, he recoiled with fear and felt the marrows freeze. However that may be, he could not forget the girl he loved. Her image constantly appeared before his eyes. She is, he thought, amaz-

ingly beautiful. In colour, complexion, form of face, majestic carriage of head, there is nothing to be desired. He had misgivings about her. Is she well provided for? Does she not feel miserable? These and other hundred questions incessantly tormented him.

Chapter 8.



Mrs. Masaki, whom we left in the end of Chapter III, had anxiously waited for her husband. She listened to every footstep on the pavement and the slightest sound that stirred within the house for the approach of her husband. He had promised to be back in a short time and his prolonged absence began to excite a considerable alarm in the household. At every disappointment, Mrs. Masaki and her servant Hana cast blank looks upon each other. The mistress surmised that her husband called in a tea-house, or perhaps he was waylaid and killed, or perhaps he was poisoned by Uchimata Kōan.

At this juncture, Mr. Masaki entered the house to the great relief of his wife.

He knew the depraved character of Uchi-mata Kōan and that if he had shown any friendly disposition towards him it was for the sake of policy. Certainly, in this instance he had acted very cleverly, got into his (Kōan's) bosom, and tried to exact from him every information that was likely necessary for the success of his course.

"Anything to our advantage?" inquired Mrs. Masaki bowing down before her husband.

"Nothing whatever," replied he rather in a melancholy tone.

"Though," continued he, "that physician promised to acquaint us with the movement of the foes and otherwise assist us, we cannot depend on him."

"Certainly not. But did you not notice something very peculiar in his look this morning?"

"Yes, I did. Nothing serious comes of it, I hope."

"I almost suspect there is some foul play in this business."

"You may be right, perhaps."

There was something very anguish in the face of Mr. Masaki. His wife has stolen cunning looks on his face as she bent down on the mat, folding her husband's walking dress. As a woman, Mrs. Masaki was full of sentiments from romantic down to the hard facts of every day life. As a wife, she was very considerate, painstaking, kind, and cheerful; and as a mother, very affectionate, symphathetic, and modest. She felt a great

anxiety about his son. She constantly asked herself where he is and what he is doing now. Is he not suffering from want? Would some body shelter him and attend to his washings? or is he not cast among highwaymen and delight in plundering travellers? No, no, he is too good for that; he is handsome; some girl might fall into love with him and he may be adopted by the girl's father.

Between these speculations and the fear of attack from the gang of the gamblers, Mrs. Masaki placed herself, and at the sight of any apparel or article that belonged to Isami, she would give herself up to hysterical fits.

"You are downcast," said Mr. Masaki looking at her.

"Why should I not be? when I lost my s—," retorted she.

The emotion was too much for her. She could not pronounce the word son and broke into violent sobs.

Mr. Masaki was deeply touched by the scene, but like a strong-hearted *samurai* he suppressed his feeling which was testified by the contortion of his face.

Mrs. Masaki went on sobbing when a loud voice calling for admittance was heard. It was accompanied by the furious knocking at the door. Mrs. Masaki and Hana were startled and screamed out for help, concluding that the gamblers have come to wreck vengeance. Masaki Tatewaki was somewhat frightened, but his experience soon told him that the noise was not that of an attacking party. Before

he could pacify his wife who was pacing up and down the room in a state of great commotion, the visitor burst open the door and a female figure with dishavelled hair and dress, hurled itself in with a great velocity, landing in the centre of the room, to the great consternation of Mrs. Masaki and the servant.

"You stupid thing," said she scolding the servant, "why did you leave the door unfastened?"

"Fasten the door, yes, mam," faltered out the servant stupified by this uncommon event.

"No, why did y—?"

"Yes, open the door?" So saying, the servant run towards the door, stumbled over the prostrated figure, and off she went on her

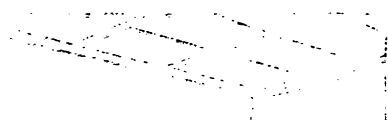
fours. The scene was so comical, yet so much excited, that Masaki Tatewaki was taken aback and stood quiet in the corner of the room.

The lying figure, which seemed to all appearances quite dead, was restored to its sense by the collision and slowly rose on its feet, exposing to the view, the form of Harukichi, the *geisha* whom we saw in Chapter I.

This discovery, however, did not mitigate the wonder and bewildment of Mrs. Masaki who knew nothing about the girl. But Mr. Masaki was acquainted with her from a great many years ago. In fact, when she had made her *debut* at Yanagibashi, he was attracted by her beauty and noble air about her and patronized her to the fullest extent of his pocket. He knew the girl, of course, but



Harukichi, the *geisha*, restored to her sense by the collision.



could not make out what brought her to his house. In the mind of Mrs. Masaki, wildest speculations were uppermost. She even thought that the girl was in love with her husband, whom she regarded as a most handsome man in existence (this was the proudest moment with her, because it brought the reflection with it that she was his wife).

Harukichi apologized Mr. Masaki first and Mrs. Masaki next (less politely) for having intruded in the rudest fashion; but said that the magnitude of her business demanded a prompt action and in her anxiety to execute it she has forgotten herself. As Harukichi thus spoke, Mrs. Masaki stared on her face with a fixed look and seemed to mutter something to herself that was unintelligible. And now she was thinking about her sister

who was died long ago: of the splendour of her beauty there was nothing left to be desired; yet the mouth was rather too powerful, or sensuous; her eyes were very tender, and expressive, but terrible sight to look at when she was in passion.

"A moment ago," said Harukichi addressing Mr. Masaki, "I have been in company of Uchi-mata Kōan and a friend of his at 'Tamaya.'"

"What they said?" inquired Mr. Masaki.

"They are planning a vile plot against you, sir," said she.

"What plot is it?"

"To rob you of money, sir. If they fail in that, they will murder you and get money from the other party. And—."

"Who is the other party?" interrupted Mr. Masaki who knew very well that it

was the gamblers.

"Of that I could not hear anything," replied she.

"Did they mention my son's name?"

"I do not know your son's name."

"Masaki Isami."

"O that name! they called two or three times."

Mrs. Masaki, who awoke from her physiognomic meditation and watched the feature of Harukichi as if to compare it with that of her deceased sister, clapped her hands with glee and sent up a triumphant shout, saying that she knew from the beginning that Uchimata Kōan had the knowledge of the quarrel. Mr. Masaki presented Harukichi with a sum of money for her trouble; but she positively refused it and left for her home.

Chapter 9.

After traversing the steep and difficult passages which conducted to the summit of the hill of Asuka that lay in the province of Kōshu, Masaki Isami found himself in an open space commanding the view of the surrounding countries. The tops of some of the distant hills were still covered with snow; while the paddy fields for many miles round put on the appearance of a vast ocean with its blue water. Birds of prey were soaring high, but did not elevate themselves higher than the monastery of Shōfukuji which stood majestically on this elevation and the uppermost roof of which almost buried itself in

the cloud. The building was very spacious, covering a large tract of land. Though old and garnished with the wear of the age, it exhibited the splendour of its architecture to full advantage: the red paint, which was gorgeous in its palmer days, crumbled off and the wood peeped out here and there. Inside it was one mass of golden flame: the ceiling, the walls, the pillars, the dais on which was placed the Buddha, and every thing else were lacquered in rich gold. The metal ornaments were mostly gold, and in the night when lights were offered to the Buddha the place shone with dazzling brilliancy. In addition to this, the Buddha was supposed to emit his holy light from his body. The splendour and richness within contrasted strangely with the desultory look without.

To this sacred place, Masaki Isami brought Ume in his previous visit. Now, he came to confer with the chief priest and take the necessary measures for the safety of the girl. We shall leave him here while prosecuting his business, and investigate the circumstances attending the disappearance of Ume. The girl fell into a passionate love with Hatsuneya Harujiro who reciprocated the feeling on his part. He would probably have married her but for the degraded condition of her father who was a gambler of the least influence and of no reputation. While the lovers were devising a means by which they could put an end to the social objection, Ume's father lost all his money in a single game, borrowed money from his friends which he lost again, and pawned all

his clothing and that of Ume's mother to raise money wherewith to regain his loss. But the luck went against him: he lost all his money. His friends pressed him for their money; but he could not repay. Unable to fulfil his promises, and looked down as ruined, and held in contempt by those whom he had hitherto kept in a state of subjugation, he felt the utmost mortification. At last, he hit upon a plan. It was to put Ume in servitude in a house of ill-fame at Yoshiwara. When her father told her his determination and apologized her for the cruelty of his action, she evinced a great surprise and bitterly cried. The mother thought her daughter would die that moment. But she recovered, and promised to serve her father. Poor Ume! Her sorrow, vexation, and sad fore-

biddings; the rapid succession of bitter and thrilling feelings that whirled through her mind were not to be described. Compelled! by her obligation to her parents to sell her life, yet unwilling to part from her lover!

In the evening, when Ume left her home accompanied by her father to take her situation in the doomed house, Masaki Isami suddenly appeared and carried off Ume to the monastery of Shōfukuji. Such was the cause of Ume's disappearance.

Masaki Isami has acquainted the priest with the object of his second visit and with the particulars of the fighting in which he had killed twenty men. This fighting had no connection with carrying away of Ume. Her father could not know who he was at the moment of snatching her from his hands.

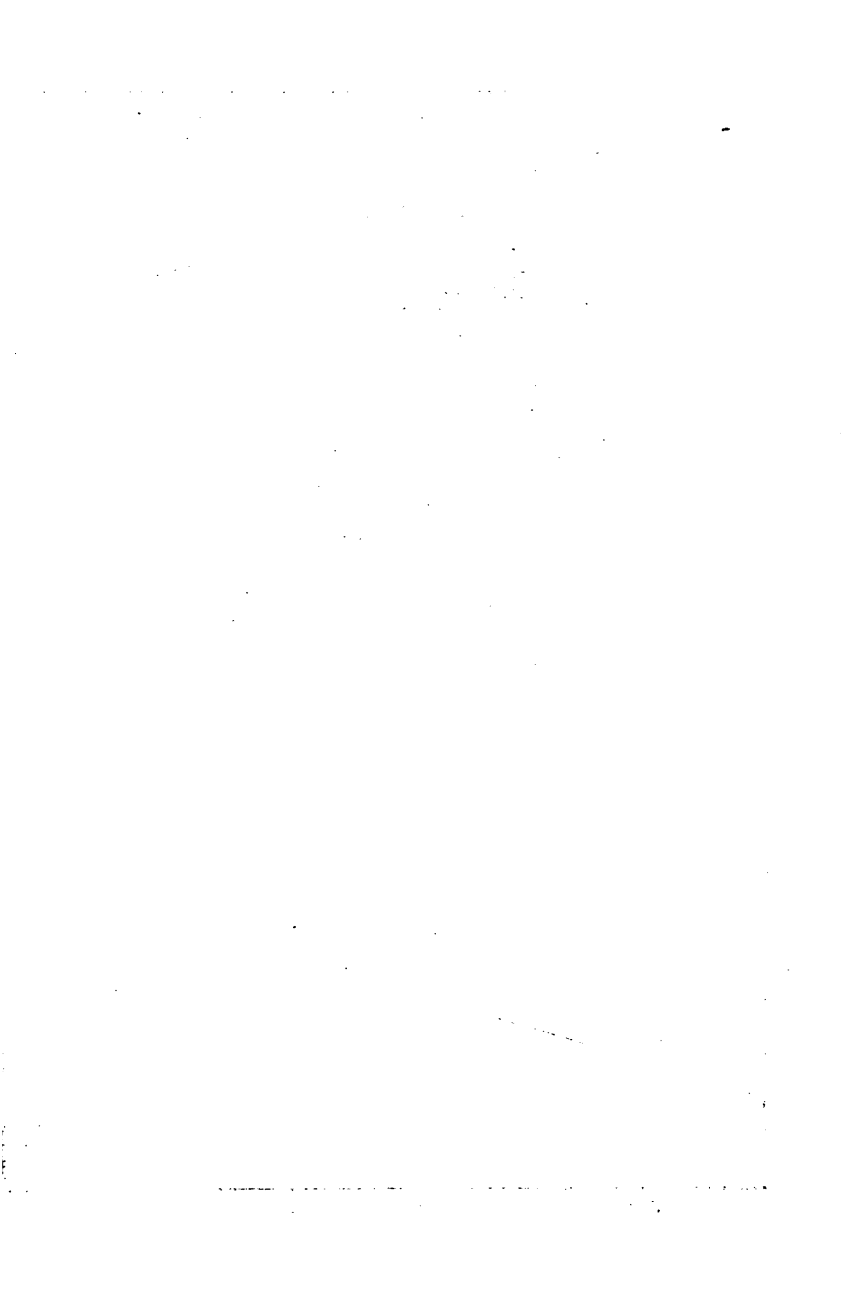
The quarrel arose from an insult offered to him by gamblers, while taking a tiffin in a tea-house, to which he repaired on his way home from his first visit to the monastery of Shōfukuji.

Ume was delighted to see Masaki Isami who saved her life from being wasted in that den of brutality, foulness, and disease—house of ill-fame. If she were rejoiced to see him, she was equally surprised to hear of the occurrence of the fight. In her mind, the destiny of the letter which she sent to Hatsuneya Harujirō was uppermost. She resolved to ask him if he knew what became of her letter; but she would change her subject as she began to speak. Three or four times she made efforts, but her courage failed. At last, she got despaired, retired

to her own solitary chamber in the monastery, and contemplated going down to Yedo to see her lover. Quickly she completed her preparation in a moment and as she went to the room—where the chief priest and Isami sat—to take last look at them, her attention was called by the frequent mention of her lover's name. She got startled, retreated, then advanced, and stood precisely where she was before. She listened, her eyes fixed and her hands on her swelling breast. One moment she would tremble; at another she would cover her face with the sleeves to prevent the torrent of tears running down her cheeks; then she would writhe in a fit of agony and struggle to keep herself steady. It was manifest that she was undergoing a violent emotion, and that she tried to pre-



Ume overhearing the sad news gives herself up to convulsions.



vent her noise from being heard by the two men. The mortification which she felt, the anxiety to see her lover, the fear of fresh outrages on her body—these feelings were too much for her. She ran back to her room and gave herself up to the violent sobbings. The fact is that she overheard the circumstances attending the disclosure of her letter to Harujirō and now she was determined to escape from the monastery.

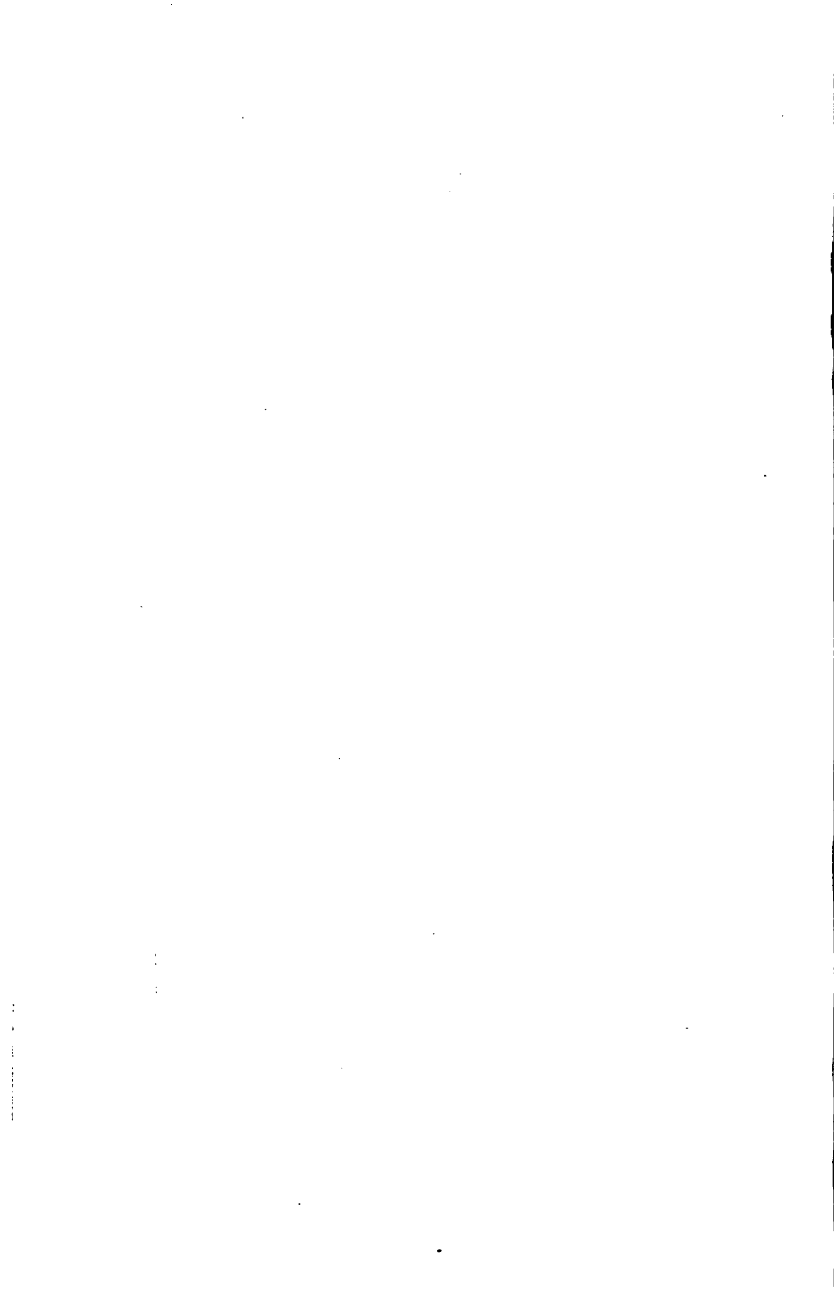
In the evening, she stole out of her room and descended the steep hills leading to the plain country below. In ordinary time, no woman could go down the hill without a bodily danger, but now in the midst of anxiety and passion no sight of danger presented itself to the mind of Ume. The next morning she was far away from the monastery.

The disappearance of Ume created a considerable sensation and alarm in the monastery. Masaki Isami hastened down the hills in pursuit of her; while the abbot instituted thorough search of the monastery, for it was feared that she committed a suicide out of despondency. But, it failed.

Masaki Isami pursued her, and learned at a wayside inn that a young girl answering his description was seen, but in a very weak state of health. This intelligence relieved him of the apprehension that she destroyed herself. But he went on continuing his pursuit, and at the next village learned to his great horror, that Ume jumped headlong over a precipice and killed herself. If any proof were required, it was furnished by one of her sleeves hanging on the precipice which



月
鏡
画



was probably caught when she jumped down. It was with a heavy heart, that Masaki shaped his course to Yedo taking with him the fragment of the clothing in question.

Chapter 10.

In a very popular and fashionable quarter of Yanagibashi, and yet in the torelably narrow *locale* of Itajin-michi, there stood a handsome building of two stories that receded from the neighboring houses. The space in the front hemmed in by a tall wooden fence was converted to a garden very attractively laid out. The pine trees, most conspicuous by their greenness and freshness, stood shading other trees with their rich foliage and casting magnanimous looks on the moss below. A stone bridge spanned over the miniture lake that showed its stony beds. Here and there were strewn

about the stone lanterns which were sometimes lit in the summer evening. In the corner on the left hand side, there stood a massive stone basin of octangular shape which borne the mark of great antiquity. As one looked down from the upper corridor along which ran a long line of wooden rails, the place was altogether impressive;—though none of the spaciousness and grandness was discernible which one observes in the gardens of larger size,—yet there was something like beauty and exactness arrayed in harmonious order. Such was the famous tea house of Tamaya. In one of the upstairs rooms facing the railings, there sat Uchimata Kōan and his friend Hirutonbi-no-hachi. Before them were spread on the mat in a great abundance the ea-

tables of all kinds and *sake*. They were waited upon by the mistress of the house (who always officiated as a waitress whenever any spendthrift came). Judging from their remarks and the profuse apology of the mistress for the delay of something or other, it was evident that they were waiting for some one to come. Presently, there appeared a *geisha* tacking up her skirt—which swept over the floor with her left hand, and opening the *shoji* (paper door) with her right hand, she bowed down and announced herself with a “Konban wa!” (good evening). “Ari—(Thank you)” said she addressing the doctor and his friend as she sat down.

“You are late, Haru-chan,” remarked the mistress in a tone of remonstrance.

"I was interrupted by a ——."

"By whom. By your sweetheart—eh?" ejaculated the doctor pinching the girl on her thigh.

"Doctor, you are too cruel" answered the girl laughingly, at the same time, removing his hand from her thigh.

"A perfect beauty—a picture, a—a—upon my soul she is!" interposed Hirutom-bi-no-Hachi looking at the girl.

"My eyes, then, didn't deceive me," said the doctor casting amorous looks on the girl who said—

"I know you make a fool of me." Now, every body having said what he or she wanted to say, Harukichi took up her *samisen*, tuned, and played it skilfully, singing an usual complimentary song. As she brought

it to the conclusion, the physician drew out his purse from his pocket, took out gold coins, and gave them to the *geisha* and the mistress of the tea-house. At this, more thanking, bowing, pinching, and slapping took place.

The physician, who never in his life spent a single cash of his own accord (in fact, he could not afford for it) for the rioting of this sort, was very liberal to-night almost verging on lavishness. The girls and his friend were wondering what run of good luck made the medical man so boisterous and merry.

The cups having now made frequent rounds, the two friends were drunk and commenced the carousing with a redoubled courage and jest. Harukichi played one

or two popular airs on her *samisen*. It was something to the following effect:—

* *Fude wa kawai ya*
Tōdo no michi wo
Tayori kiitari kikasetari.

† *Yume ni au yo ga*
Utsutsu to natte
Utsutsu ni kurō ga
Nakeria yoi.

* Pen is such a dear thing: it enables [you and me] to correspond over a great distance.

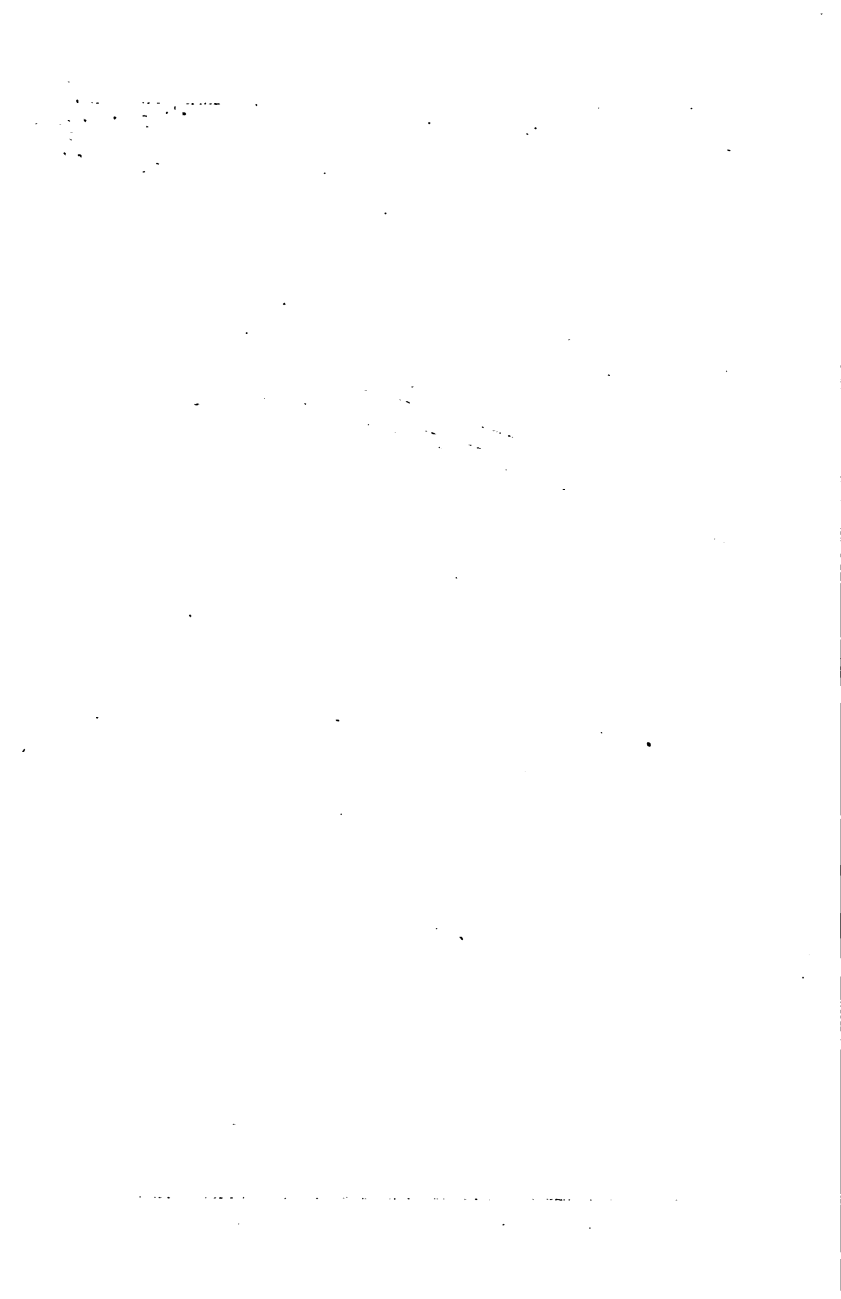
† I wish, as we meet in a dream, that it was this real world, and that, after this hope was realized, there shall be no anxiety to feel in this world.

"Devilish fine voice," shouted Hirutombi-no-Hachi, gazing at his friend as much as to say "you have not the same good voice as Harukichi"

"Hear mine. Haruchan, set your music agoing? will you?" said the doctor with a degree of vengeance. No sooner he began to sing "F——" than his friends broke into the violent convulsions which almost shook the house. His voice was harsh, and sounded very much like the growl of a hungry dog. The doctor has frightened himself and buried his face in the sleeves of his cloth. His friend essayed, was more successful, and received the rounds of applause. The doctor attributing the failure of his voice to one of his organs being disabled, and challenged his friend in the play of *ken*.



The physician challenging the gambler in the play of *Ken*.



"One, two," commenced he brandishing his hands with all might and main. Down came the candlestick tumbling over as his hands struck it and in its descent broke two or three *sake* bottles. Out streamed the liquor making the dress of Harukichi wet and there ensued a general confusion and darkness. Every body rose on his legs to keep his apparel from soil, (but not one soul stirred to clean the mat.)

The surprise over, the doctor and his friend found themselves seated on different places—the doctor far away from Harukichi and Hachi very close to her. Hachi caught the girl by her arm and whispered something to her ear—whereupon the enraged medical man sung out.

"No, damn it. None of your game here!

This was said with so much energy that every body feared that the friends might quarrel about the girl. Hachi saw that his friend was jealous, released his grasp on the girl, and said that it was a joke.

The *geisha* left the room for a moment and the mistress of the tea-house was already gone. The two friends now left to themselves, groaned, sighed, and said they were tired. The doctor, who was awfully drunk by this time, said—

“I’ve something very important to tell you. If you can manage your part, we shall have a jolly fine time of it.”

“I’ll do it if I can,” replied his friend who still employed himself in considering how his medical friend came into the possession of so large a sum of money.

"Death or life?" asked the doctor.

"What! life or death? I can't understand you," said Hachi.

"I mean that if you will do it, I will spare your life, if not I'll kill you. You don't know what a good hand I am at poisoning the people."

This was said with a greatest frankness for he was more adept at killing people than curing them of their disease.

Hachi had certain misgivings which grew more and more intensified as he listened to the narration of the circumstances of the affair which befell Hatsuneya Harujirō. The doctor offered, in order to tempt him in the action, the sum of 50 *ryo* and suggested how to put the plan into execution. The physician quite forgot that the *geisha*

had gone only for a moment, and felt sure that no body could hear his conversation. In the mind of Hachi, however, there arose a different idea which will shortly be seen. During all this time, Harukichi stood outside the *shoji*, heard every thing, stole out of the tea-house, proceeded to the house of Mr. Masaki posthaste, and acquainted him with the plot in the manner we have seen in chapter VIII.

The physician called out for bill, paid it, and left the tea-house, accompanied by Hirutombi-no-Hachi, in the direction of Ōkawa. As they came along the bank of the Sumida river past the Riukiubashi, Hachi retreated a few steps behind his friend and before he (his friend) could turn back, buried his naked steel on the back of the physician.

It took effect: he groaned, swooned, and fell down gibbering and writhing. Hachi threw the body into the river. At this moment, the moon rose above the vast stream of the water and poured a flood of silvery light on the road. Helped by this light, Hachi counted the number of the coins he took from his companion, and casting wistful glances round the place started homeward.

Chapter 11.

It was in the evening and it was growing very dark in the street of Asakusa Hanakawado, as the place was called, and where abounded the habitations of gamblers —when Ikeyama Hikozyayemon and Onikuma presided over a secret meeting of their followers with great dignity and solemnity. Shortly afterwards, the meeting was broken up and the scene of great excitement, which has hitherto filled the place, has changed to that of a deadly silence. The men dispersed with sad looks and murmured that they were deprived of a fine chance to indulge in a blood-spilling. They were carrying

home all sorts of odd weapons —long swords short daggers, kitchen knives, iron bars, etc.

The truth is that on the eve of making the preconcerted attack on the domicile of Masaki Isami, Ikeyama Hikozaemon found out that his adversary has not made an adequate means of defence and considered that to attack a man in his helpless condition was a shame and ill-becoming a *samurai*, however degraded he was. Onikuma too perceived that to attack a father for what his son had done is irrational and does no credit to his reputation as a gambler of principle. Yet, to give up the scheme so far hatched was full of disastrous consequences and quite impossible: his men would conclude that he has fled from danger; they would turn their backs against

him and there was no telling that they might revolt and upset his authority. With this process of reasoning—though he withdrew the injunctions he had previously given to his men—determined to give a due notice to Masaki Tatewaki and fight it out himself. In this, however, he was desuaded by Ikeyama Hikozaemon, who entirely out of the desire to show his skill as a fencer and his bravery as a *samurai*, undertook to punish Masaki Tatewaki and his son Isami. The inconsistency or the hazardousness of his task did not weigh with him. Accordingly, he sallied forth from Onikuma's house the evening after the solemn meeting was dispersed. He was attired in black, his *hakama* (wide pantaloons) stuck up to his waist, the sleeves tied up with

white cloth worked into cord, and his legs exposed just below the ankles. He had his forehead protected by a cotton towel tied on the back. His weapons consisted of one sword and one dagger, which would remain on his side, as long as the long sword is not broken. Thus armed, he has announced himself at the house of Masaki Tatewaki and intimated his business through the servant who responded to the call. Masaki Tatewaki who received the announcement with no more surprise than a wrinkle of his eyes, welcomed the visitor, who looked different from what Masaki Tatewaki saw of him at their last meeting in a tea-house at Ryōgoku.

"This day I have come to revenge the death of my comrades," said Ikeyama Hi-

kozayemon bowing very low.

"You are welcome. We will give you a warm reception," replied Masaki Tatewaki with graveness in his manner.

"A father must suffer for his son—eh? This is inconsistent, but then this world is made of inconsistency. We are a part and parcel of it."

"Ah well said! A *samurai* must die like a *samurai*."

It was a grand view to see the two strong men standing in offensive attitudes with the naked swords in their hands and exchanging the compliments which *samurai* would not ignore even at the moment of death. The whole household was astir by this time: Mrs. Masaki had a sort of presentiment and who never missed an oppor-

tunity to enlarge upon the result of her prognostigation, bustled about the adjoining rooms lecturing to every domestic—not even the puss excepted, if puss can ever understand human talk—that she expected this sort of thing would happen precisely at this hour. She looked extremely agitated, but her countenance had a strange look: it was not that of one who was threatened with a death, but that of one who felt anxious for the vindication of one's right. She would have joined her husband and assisted him to despatch his adversary, but for the consideration of etiquette which held her back.

In the meantime, the two belligerents approached each other and crossed the points of their swords. Now, Ikeyama Hikoza-

mon tapped his sword three or four times against his adversary's, at the same time springing back for a determined attack. Masaki Tatewaki met him in tierce and waited for the blow with every muscle in his thigh ready for any movement. After a short pause, the two men were in the thicket of the battle. Eye, hand, brain, and muscle acted on one another with a rapidity, compared to which, the lightening was too slow. The combatants were quite again, breathing. No blood has been drawn. But before one could breathe another moment, they were at it again. In this short encounter, they lived ten lives. The swords met and parted sixty times. At last, Ike-yama Hikozaemon missed his aim, lost his balance, and fell down. Masaki gave

him blows in rapid succession. Ikeyama Hikozaemon fell stone died, grovelling in the pool of the blood that streamed from the wounds.

The whole household assembled to look at, and examine the body. If they were astonished by the splendour of the dead man's physical structure they were equally astonished by the discovery that he was one Hatakeyama Shinjiro who murdered the husband of Mrs. Masaki's sister many years ago. The murder was perpetrated under the most cruel and monstrous circumstances. At the time it was known, the whole clan of Shimōsa was thrown into a pitched state of sensation and sorrow for the murdered man who was respected among the whole clan. His widow and a child were

city of Yedo, had completely changed his appearance. He shaved his head, assumed the habilment of a priest, and put up in a third class hotel. "Suspicion creates a demon," as a Japanese proverb has it, and Masaki Isami, full of apprehensions, saw the officers of law even in his own shadow and mistook every audible sound for the signal to make raid on the hotel. This was but an imagination and one unseparable from those placed in the similar predicament as Masaki Isami. In the daytime, he concealed himself in the recess of his apartment and occasionally chanted the Buddhistic canons to effect the incantment, as he styled it, of Ume's spirit and partly to impress the hotel-keeper with an idea that he was a genuine

disciple of Buddha the Almighty. In the night, however, when the darkness rendered the chances of detection remote, he left the hotel to call upon Hatsuneya Harujiro. For three or four consecutive nights, he went out and came back at the advanced hour. Presumably he could not have seen Hatsuneya Harujiro on the first or second night, his store being closed after a certain hour in the evening and no admittance allowed. As the city was infested with burglars, some of them as brave as lion, and whose prowess was a standing menace even to the soldiery, rich merchants had to fortify their stores in manners best approved by the military science. It was no easy task to secure admittance, therefore. Masaki Isami had to

wait for some one of the domestics of the house come out or enter the house, then to announce his name, and communicate his business to Hatsuneya Harujiro. On the third night, such chance accrued and directly he was admitted and shown to the drawing room. The merchant saluted the visitor in a most feverent manner, and if he was astonished to see the clerical appearance of Masaki Isami, he was aggrieved to hear of the death of Ume. Masaki Isami, proceeding with the promptitude of business man, conveyed the intelligence in a few words. Hatsuneya Harujiro desired to have undisputable evidence of the occurrence and on being shown the sleeve of Ume's clothe, uttered a cry, — harrowing and heart-rending shriek

it was, that seemed to make the room quiver as with horror. The merchant lay unconscious for some minutes, but soon after, recovering his sense rose and apologized the visitor, saying that he was quite ashamed of his childish behaviour.

"That I should serve you," said Masaki Isami, "in this manner must be due to some relation that existed between you and me in the past."

"Ah! There is no doubt about that," ejaculated the merchant.

"This is still more wonderful when we belong to the different classes—you to the armed gentry of the land and I to the lowest order of the society."

"Moral sentiment knows no distinction. What is more, my profession requires that

having kindness once shown, I should remember and repay it. I have yet scarcely discharged my obligation towards you, my friend.

“It is on my side that obligation remains undischarged.”

Hatsuneya Harujiro tried hard to recoup the yong *sauurai* for his sacrifices and sufferings which he has undergone for his sake. Masaki Isami was proof against all persuasions and entreaties. Hatsuneya Harujiro saw the fruitlessness of further efforts and resigned himself to the good will of his friend who had no earthly desire.

The news of Ume's death was conveyed to her father who went into a great lamentation,—because, he thought his exer-

cise of the paternal authority was the direct cause of her death, and at whose request, the obsequies was observed over Ume's spirit as embodied in the piece of her apparel in question. The ceremony took place at the old man's house, being attended by Hatsuneya Harujiro and Masaki Isami who officiated as assistant priest to the chief *bonze* from one of the Buddhist monasteries in the vicinity. The service was short, but impressively carried out. All did not end here, however. Masaki Isami was to carry with him the clothing alluded to to the monastery of Shōfukuji and there to bury it in a becoming style. There were also strong reasons which prompted him in this endless vexatious business. The monastery being

one of those religious institutes having exceptional privileges, was virtually placed beyond the operation of law and Masaki Isami sought protection there, at least, for the time being. Accordingly, he took leave of Hatsuneya Harujiro soon after the funeral service was over, and departed for Kōshu, travelling by the night and avoiding the thickly populated districts where was likely the least chance of detection. It was early in the morning when he reached Mt. Asuka on the fifth day after leaving the city of Yedo. The chief priest alone was awake and taking walk in the garden; while the novices and servants were asleep. The priest welcomed Masaki Isami, his benevolent looking face beaming with delight but

only for a moment. For as soon as they entered the chamber, Masaki Isami unfolded to the priest the details concerning the death of Ume, and asked him to offer prayers that her spirt might reach the Nirwana. The priest was greatly affected to hear the news and shed tears. But like a true disciple of Buddha, he soon cheered up, told Masaki how Buddha taught humanity to face the Inevitable bravely, and otherwise tried to mitigate the sadness of the occasion. By and by, all the members of the monastery arose and bestirred themselves with the morning prayers, which they cut very short by uttering a few unintelligible words.

“Away with it! I’ve got through with this bothering business,” ejaculated one of the priests.

"I would gladly exchange the eternal happiness for a short pleasure down town," joined another.

They were not a little frightened when they saw the head priest and Masaki Isami approaching the vestibule. The chief priest announced that a grand ceremony was about to be observed in memory of Ume, and ordered that his subordinates should sing litany in good earnest to evoke the aid of Buddha. Presently, they arrayed themselves in circle having the chief priest in the centre and commenced the service with great zest, which was due to their having had no breakfast as yet, and to have which they proceeded with their work as heartily as possible. Masaki Isami was apparently struck by the corrupted condi-

tion of the priesthood, and from this moment, he began to abhor their society, but could not give vent to his feeling and was obliged to mingle with them. Thus, he continued to live in the monastery enjoying its sanctum and beyond the reach of law.

Chapter 13.

Hirutonbi-no-Hachi hastened to his house after perpetrating the murder, and as he stood in his room, his arms folded, looking up to the stormy sky which was a bright moon-light night a few moments ago he asked himself:— Was it possible that above this awful sky these reigns a peace to which the wearied souls might hurry? He marched out of the house determined to fly off from Yedo. It was a dreary night. The wind howled furiously, while the rain fell in torrent striking his face like a shower of pins. Road, nor light was visible — only a scene of wild, drifting blackness.

On he went facing the storm and gloom and when it passed away he was far away from Yedo. He was tormenting his mind over the disposal of the money he took from Uchimata Kōan. He firmly believed, that by killing the physician he vindicated the right of his friend Hatsu-neya Harujiro, from whom the physician extorted the money. He enclosed the money and sent it to Hatsu-neya Harujiro without explaining the reason for doing so. The merchant, when he received the money, threw himself into a complete state of wonder — a wonder not without agreeable element in it, the like of which every body desires to have. A hundred opinions were hazarded as to the object of the sender, and the magnanimity of his cha-

racter. It was concluded that some body made mistake and sent the money to the wrong place and that there would soon appear a person claiming it. Hatsuneya Harujiro having had experience at being blackmailed, thought that this was a ruse for him and he was about going to report the matter to the magistrate, when a letter from Masaki Isami informed him of the murder of Uchimata Kōan by Hirutonbi-no-Hachi. A strange name he thought and could not recollect who he was, and wondered why Masaki Isami should specially mention that name as though it was well known to him. He perused the epistle again and again.

Of sudden he exclaimed, "O! I see." He put the coins into his stronghold

and said not a word, but his face beaming with joy betrayed so great a confidence and complaisance of his mind. Directly he penned a letter and sent it to Mt. Asuka addressed to Iseya Kinji. It read as follows:—

“I am at loss what to say, but feel so grateful and ask you to find the proof not in words but in action. Until your revelation reached me through Masaki Isami, our mutual friend and my benefactor, I was trembling with horror at the idea of being victimatized again. It seemed almost inconceivable at first, that you should enter the fraternity of gamblers, and that you should murder Uchimata Kōan. Your statement about the proposal made to you by that medical man at Tamaya to rob me

struck me like a lightening. It is no use telling now what had already passed, but it is a satisfaction to mention that there is always a willing hand to gain redress for the wrong and Uchimata Kōan richly deserves his fate. You have set example to this principle which, I hope, will receive the sanction of the government who ostentiously aim at suppressing the evil and encouraging chivalrous deeds. I feel, however, very sorry that you are undergoing privation which you would not have incurred but for my sake. While happy to think that the two friends — you and Masaki Isami — have spared no trouble or pain to assist me, it is the saddest thing in this world to think that I have been the cause of their sufferings. I am, however, persuaded that

Kami (unforeseen power) is pretty liberal in his distribution of reward, so that you may depend upon the fact that in your present hardship is the germ of future happiness.

As regard the money you have restored to me, I cannot accept it, but will keep it in custody for you. I pray, that when you establish yourself again in Yedo, it shall be my fortune to present you with the fund.

Believe me, I am yours

most faithfully,

Hatsuneya Harujiro.

July 15th 1802,

P. S.—I will write to Mr. Masaki Isami in a few days. Many things had cropped out since our last meeting, which will be of no less importance to him than

to those places in equal position with him."

From this letter, we learn that Hirutonbi-no-Hachi was no person other than Iseya Kiuji, who learning the misfortune befalling Masaki Isami, was struck by the fortitude with which he bore the sacrifices, and resolved to assist Masaki Isami.

Iseya Kiuji was sharing the solitude in the monastery on Mt. Asuka with Masaki Isami, who has accommodated himself to the religious life with the elasticity of philosophic mind. Iseya Kiuji, when leaving his house on the night of flight, lost himself in the pious reflections as we saw him trying to peer into the inky night that spread a pall between him and Heaven. Since then he often felt a

curious feeling, mingled with gloom, stealing over him, and, in such time he thought he would seek relief in self-murder. To get rid of this incursive feeling, he was advised to contemplate on the grandness of Shaka Muni's precepts, which action was considered sufficient atonement for any guilt committed by mankind.

Chapter 14.

When the news of the death of Ikeyama Hikozaemon reached the clan of Shimōsa, the excitement was great indeed. Every body, from the lord down to the footman spoke of it, congratulating Masaki Tatewaki on his successful encounter with Ikeyama Hikozaemon. The intelligence thus spread with an alarming rapidity, growing in its intensity and magnitude as it travelled through the groove of popular comment and credulity. The simple-hearted country folks attributed something superhuman to Masaki Isami for killing Ikeyama Hikozaemon, who — a

tyrant when he was serving under their provincial lord and a heartless officer who exacted taxes from farmers—was an object of bitter hatred and dread, and who was a skilful swordsman second to none. They were bountiful in their bestowal of praise upon Masaki Tatewaki. This found echo among the retainers of the Lord of Shimōsa and some of them even hinted to their august master to employ Masaki Tatewaki. Anxious to extend the prowess of his clan, the Lord of Shimōsa adopted the above suggestion and despatched one of his chief officers, armed with the full power, to make the proposal to Masaki Tatewaki. The latter, though a masterless *samurai*, did not agree to the proposal, which was rendered impossible to be

accepted because of too magnificent a pay. This refusal made the other party more earnest in his endeavor to induce the *ronin*, and when he put the cause of his refusal in the plainest terms, the officer could not but be struck by his forbearance and self-abasement which two qualities were the ruling sentiments with those *samurai* who permitted themselves to be governed by the Chinese ethics. The officer, because he belonged to the same school of moral philosophy, saw the inviolability of Masaki's opinion and reduced the amount of the stipend by one third (which represented 100 measures of rice) with the intention to bring it to the original amount (300 measures, which estimated at 20 *rio* per 10 measures is worth 6,000 *rio*) by gradual

promotion. The amount of pay agreed upon, Masaki Tatewaki was forthwith installed in the position of the master of Ceremony and librarian to the Lord of Shimōsa.

Mrs. Masaki, *minus* her weakness which found expression in the contradictness of her words and actions, was a perfect lady in every respect and soon made a large number of friend. Though, sometimes oddly reticent, she let her friends into her secret which habit sometimes brought on her their sympathy and pity. It thus happened one day, that Mrs. Masaki told her friends the story of her sister's disappearance and her subsequent death. Her husband was also in the service of the Lord of Shimōsa. This

announcement was received with an excessive manifestation of surprise and they volunteered to search for her sister's missing daughter. The matter was put in the hand of the Yedo detectives, who creditably to their profession, found the clue and haunted her out. A sad change! From the daughter of a proud *samurai* she consigned herself to the station of *geisha*. She was no individual other than Harukichi. Her story is sad enough.

Her mother bitterly cried over the misfortune that has befallen her husband. For some years, she continued to live in Shimōsa, but whatever has remained with her in the form of property having been consumed, she was obliged to seek the means by which she could support

herself and her daughter. Then she came to Yedo. But before she could prosecute her scheme, she was taken ill and died, leaving Harukichi, then fourteen years of age, utterly unprotected. Harukichi, in the pitch of despair, grew despondent, hopeless, and clung to the solace that has been offered to her in this unfriendly world. This she has found in the person of her neighbor, an old woman who showed the outward tokens of respectability. One day, she slipped into Harukichi's room (not house because it had but one room and can scarce be called house) and cheered her up saying: — "Why, why — what's the matter, dear? Such a sweet, beautiful creature as you needn't be here crying. You're in Yedo and don't know what

luck's in store for you." The unsuspecting girl saw an opening in her life and with a childish innocence entirely placed herself at the mercy of the old woman. She dressed herself up and went out with her feigned sympathy, and talked with maternal affection. Often did she take her to the theatre, so as to impress her with the gayness of the town life and what a beauty could do in Yedo. Outside gathers a meddley crowd—*samurai* in their dignified *hakama* with two swords on their waist—daughters and wives of tradesmen tricked out in their best dresses—mechanics, clerks, even common labourers—all dressed in their holiday attire. Inside, the seductive strains of music, the brilliancy of the stage scenery, the rich apparel of the spectators,

the sensual enchantments of mercenary beauty decked in borrowed silk, or in the glittering spoil of wild nobility and of *parvenu* wealth. Their painted faces and voluptuous forms casket dead virtue—they are the tellers of their own sad tales. Harukichi was enchanted with the spectacle, forgot her sorrow in the brilliant scene, and soon afterwards found herself transformed to one of the *geisha*.

This discovery put Mrs. Masaki on her mettle. She consulted with her husband, came to Yedo, and at last succeeded in wining her niece back. It was with no small difficulty that she accomplished her mission, for her employer was not to be easily circumvented. He saw, however, that being daughter of *samurai* she had a powerful

protector, and agreed to let her go without refunding her debt in consideration for her long service. Mrs. Masaki had reason to be proud of her achievement and attributed it to the working of her strong presentiment.

Chapter 15.

Since Akebono Minezo, a fireman, stopped the coming riot at the implication of Hatsuneya Harujiro, several years had passed. His friends were all up at the monastery of Shōfukuji, undergoing, so to speak, the self-imposed penalty for their crimes. The authorities at Yedo became apprised of their presence in the said monastery —yet they did not take vigorous measures for their apprehension. The public nearly forgot them, and if they choose they could have come to Yedo and live in disguise. They did not, however, entrust themselves to chances and preferred the security of

their secluded lives to the danger of being arrested and punished. Law, in its modern conceptions, has never been understood at this time; its working has been left to the caprice of a few men; and its application unlimited. It was, therefore, not every criminal that met with punishment. Some have escaped scot-free, while others have undergone wantonly cruel punishments for trifling offences.

Akebono Minezō has been of sudden brought to the public prominence by his brave deed which he had performed during a fire. One night, the Shōgun's mansion was found on fire, likely the act of an incendiary, and though the guards did their best to extinguish it, the flames

speedily extended from one building to another. The south wind, which was blowing at the time with moderation, increased in the force and blew with terrific rage, destroying house tops as it went howling over the city. Now the whole castle was enveloped in flames. There was no hope of saving it, so it was abandoned to its inevitable fate.

Almost simultaneously there was raised the cry of "Fire! fire!" in about twenty different places in the city. Sharp shrieks and shouts of men and women; wail of frightened children rushing to and fro, and deadly struggle for life in the midst of blinding smoke; loud alarm of sleepy watchmen rousing the people; and the agonizing cries of those hurt. This uncom-

mon noise came all of sudden. Among those who went to look at the burning of the Shōgun's castle, or to assist the guards to bring the fire under control, were the husbands, guardians, or friends of those who were left at home unguarded. Here come strong men with a mad rush, thrusting aside and trampling down weak women and children. In the meantime, the fires connected themselves and formed an unbroken line of fierce furnaces set up for blazing human flesh. Many brave men fought desperately to save the panic-stricken individuals and fell. All the means of communication was cut off. Now some three hundred souls are crowded trembling with fear in a particular street, the lurid light gleaming on their pallid

faces, their praying lips, their eyes fixed in horror, and in hopeless despair — while the bright flames made their way steadily and rapidly. Their destruction was a matter of moment, when a stout man clad in a fireman's uniform appeared. He stared, for a moment, at the dreadful scene and gave orders to his men. They have brought forward a considerable number of large bamboos, placed them side by side over the flames, and over this bridge of torelable strength were carried the horror-strucken individuals and landed safely at the opposite side of the street. When the last man crossed, the bridge caught fire and was reduced to ashes with the rest of the buildings. This was an extraordinary feat and could

not be performed by every body. While Akebono Minezō was thus engaged in the rescue of his fellow creatures, his house was burnt down and with it went all his worldly possessions. This was one of the largest and devastating fires that ever visited the city of Yedo. It nearly laid the whole city desolate. For nearly one year, the business was suspended, and many lived in the state of vagrancy. The poor had to be fed and clothed by the Government. They built large sheds wherein were lodged all the destitute people. Inside obtained the scene of confusion, brutality, and immorality.

Akebono Minezō was summoned, in the due course of time, before the Shōgun and received the highest compliment from

His Highness for his pluck. He was told that he can have anything he wanted as a reward for his humane deed. Accordingly, he petitioned the Shōgun to pardon the crimes of Masaki Isami, and Iseya Kiuji. This unusual petition granted, they quitted the Shōfukuji, came down to Yedo and settled. Masaki Isami joined the Government, while Iseya Kiuji started business having the necessary fund furnished by Hatsuneya Harujiro, who true to his promise, kept the money which has grown into a handsome sum under his judicious management.

Chapter 16.

Indulgent though to a certain extent, yet a conscious business man, Hatsuneya Harujirō constantly applied himself with a greatest energy to the commercial enterprises. He was delighted to see his friends back and congratulated them on their luck. By the latest fire, he had, nearly two-third of his property destroyed consequently became poorer to that extent, but nevertheless he was liberal and proposed to recoup Akebono Minezō for his loss. Masaki Isami and Iseya Kiūji each contributed toward the fund on liberal scale, which was further enlarged by the

handsome addition by Hatsuneya Harujirō. This sum they wrapped up in paper and presented to the brave fireman. Now the four friends had the satisfaction of seeing their mutual prosperity and participating in the enjoyment of their common happiness.

With the exception of the two friends, Masaki Isami (who was married shortly after his official appointment) and Akebono Minezo, the others were unmarried as yet. The married folks persuaded the bachelors friends to marry, pleading that the society put no trust on the wife-less people. Iseya Kiuji yielded and married Harukichi who has now re-established herself as a pure and virtuous lady. Hatsuneya Harujiro seeing all his friends

married one by one he too decided to exchange his bachelorship for a matrimonial life.

“Ah!” he sighed, “if only Ume were living, how much more happy I shall be!”

Thus, he paid tribute in memory of Ume, but it is inconceivable that he should utter such exclamation when his marriage was near being consummated.

Coming events are said to cast shadows, so it may not altogether be improbable that he felt a sort of presentiment in which he was a great believer. Be this as it may. Preparations were pushed forward with the anticipation of a change in the domestic government — servants with an undue dread for additional troubles and others with a selfish anxiety

to satisfy their mercenary motive. Each day saw an increased activity in the household as the wedding day approached. Now the day having arrived, the guests, in response to the invitation, began pouring in towards the evening. The house was crowded, and when the merriment reached the height of its uproarious degree, a girl of most handsome exterior made her appearance and no sooner she saw Hatsu-neya Harujiro than she fell on her knee and greeted him for the dawn of new life upon him. He looked at her face steadily and at once recognized that she was Ume. He tried in vain to persuade himself that she was Ume herself. In spite of her earnest assurances that she was still alive, he concluded

that it was Ume's spirit that haunted him. The guests laboured under the same illusion and one by one began to quit the room. Ume perceiving that her presence was the cause of this confusion, declared that she was not a ghost and entreated them to keep their seats.

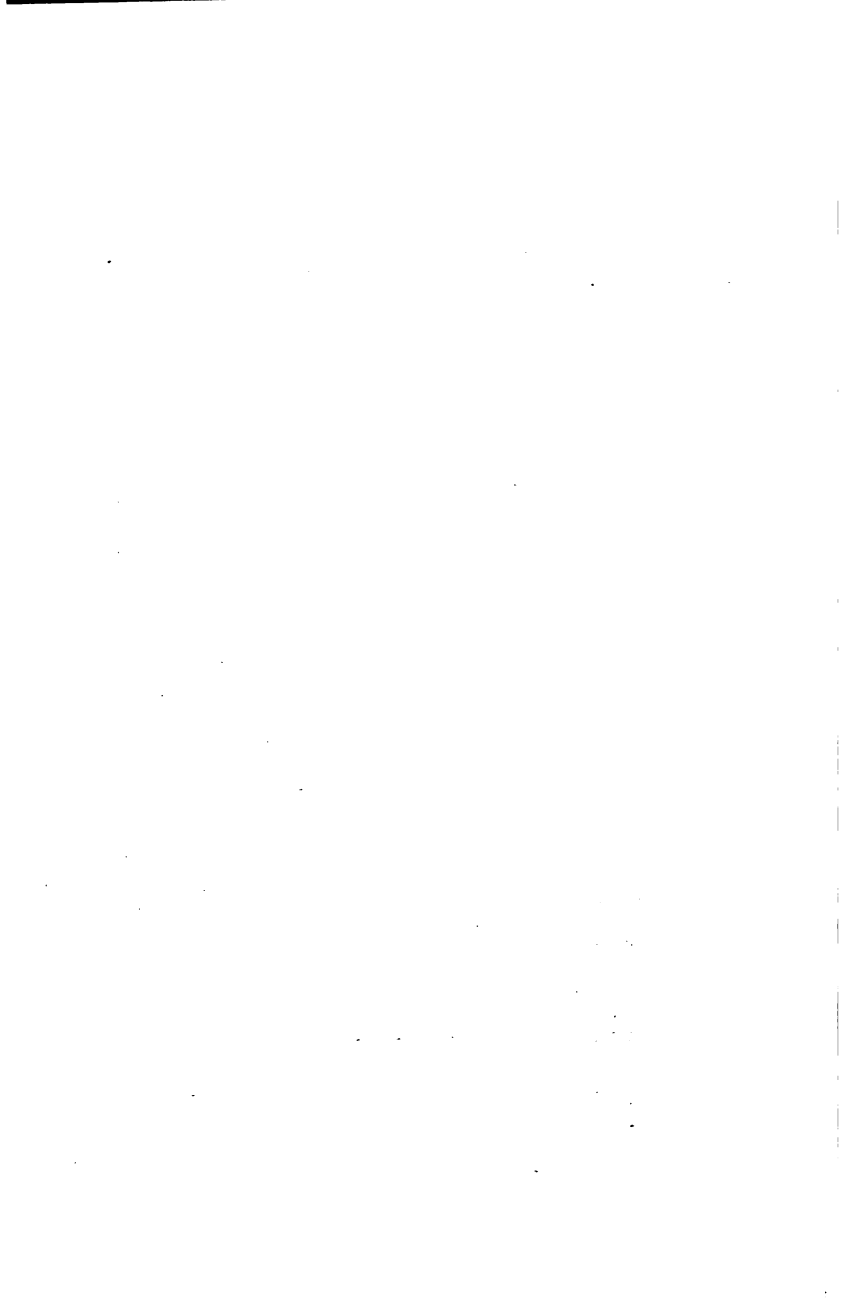
Thus obliged, she began to tell them the long story of her adventures, essentially dramatic, after her departure from the monastery of Shōfukuji. She threw herself over the precipice to destroy her life, but she was picked up by a man fishing in the river beneath the cliff. At length, Hatsuneya Harujiro saw that she was Ume herself. His bride, out of a prying curiosity, lifted up her hood which hang as far down as her chin. Her face,

full and plump, was brightened with a smile — her cherry lips and her cheeks of coralline bloom, her soft lonely lashes formed a striking picture. One could not tell which was prettier, except the difference in the age. Hatsuneya Harujirō was placed in the most embarrassed position: there was before him on one side his espoused in the course of the wedding ceremony and on the other his old sweetheart who had remained faithful to him to this moment. He hesitated to explain the mystery to his bride, but with a firm resolution desired to put a stop to the ceremony. He said nothing as to the ultimate object which induced him to make this announcement. The guests could not divine the cause, but one and

all attributed this strange conduct of his to the effect caused by the surprise. In this they were mistaken. The bride knew that Ume was a woman of good heart, and thinking that Ume had greater claim to the union with Hatsuneya Harujiro than herself, allowed him to marry Ume. Ume could not but be deeply impressed with the generous sentiment of the bride and shed tears. The bride, on her part, believed that she has done an important service by making way for fulfilling the most sacred mission of mankind — LOVE. After the marriage has been consummated between Hatsuneya Harujiro and Ume, the bride became a nun. To this action she was prompted by the precept that once having been brought into

contact with the opposite sex in wedding ceremony it was equal to her having actually married, and that it was a crime with good women to marry again. To this day, the tombs of these lovers and their friends draw a large number of visitors, young or old, who sit there in their leisure hours and draw out, so to speak, from the sepulchral fountain of love the holy water — O! thee the precious token of heavenly purity and grace — that stays the unruly passions of men and gives permanence to goodness and immortality.

The End.



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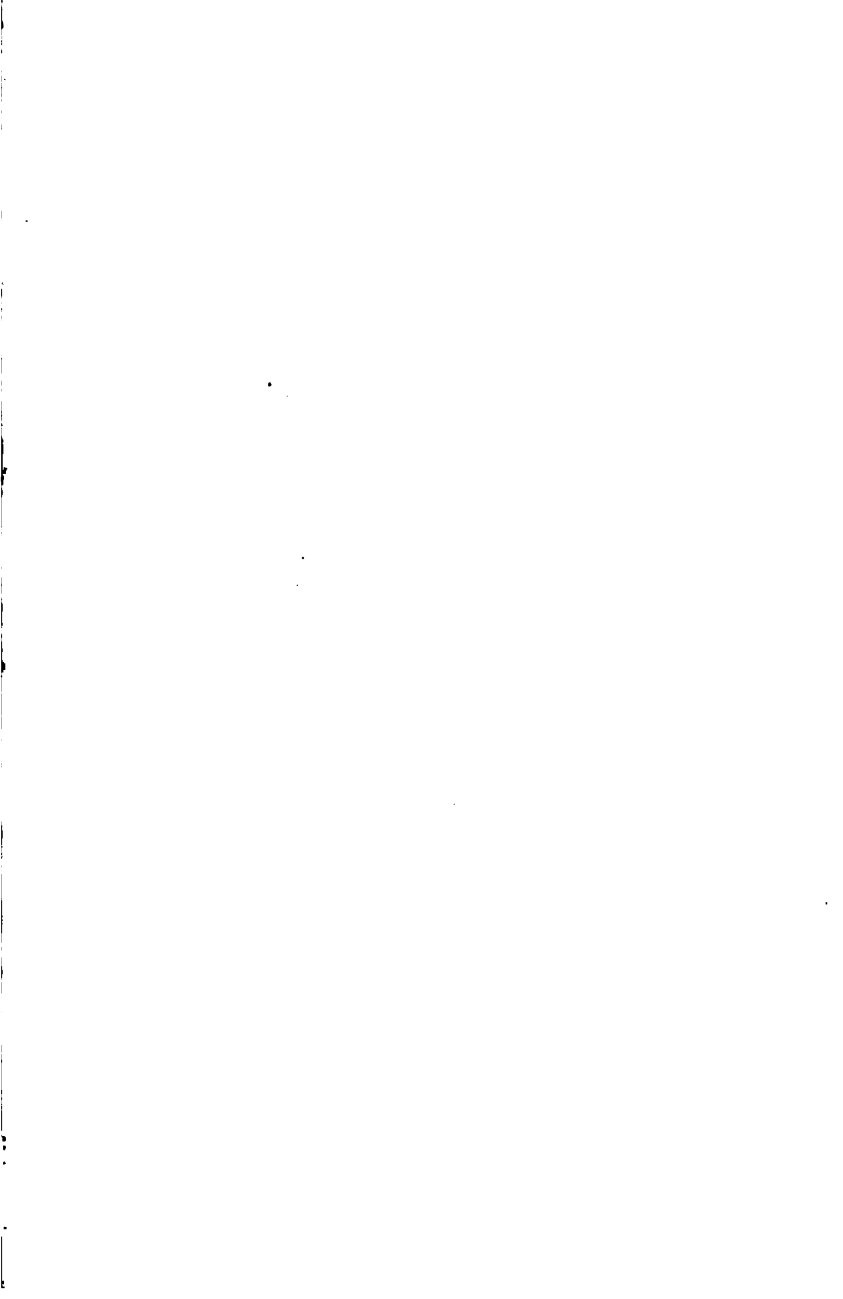
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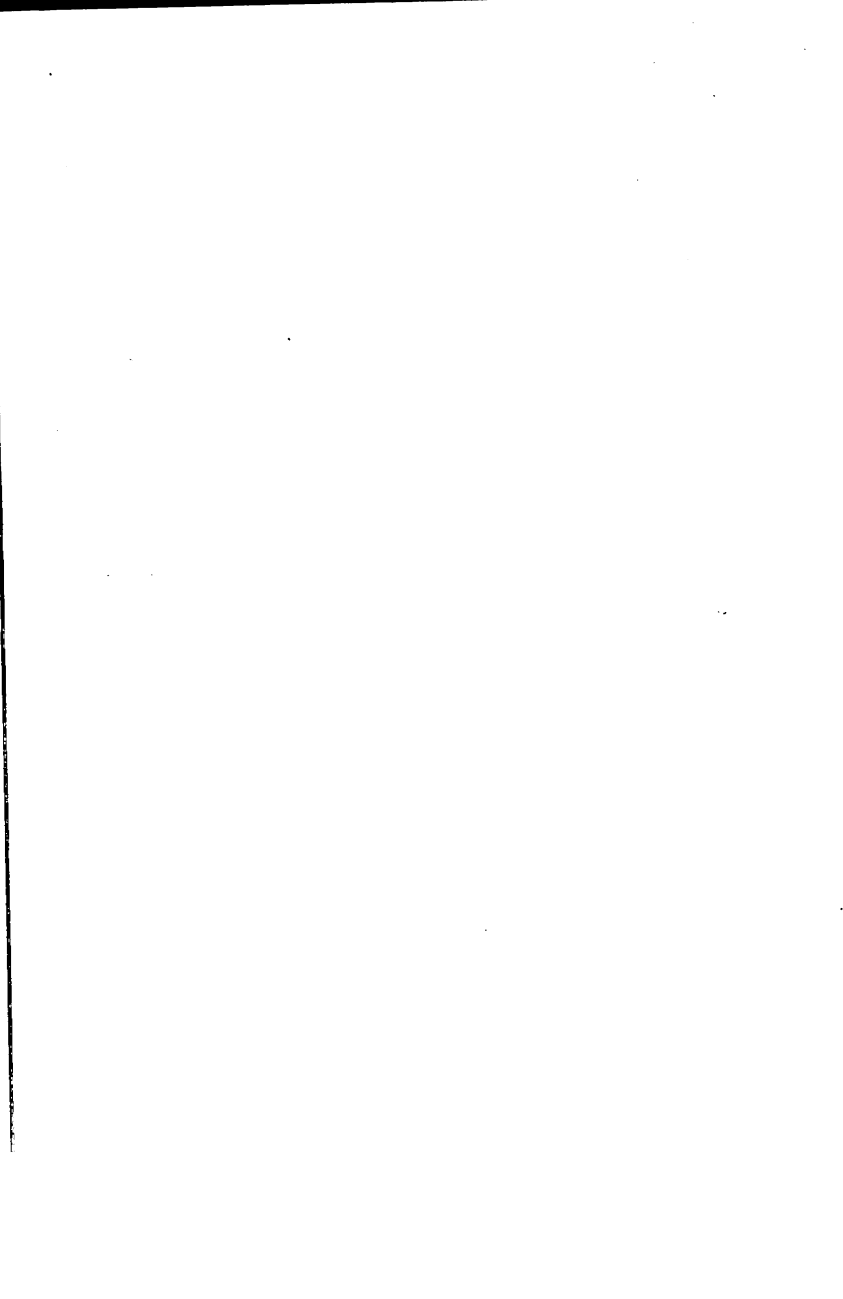
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